Centre for Iron and Steel; Ranchi on the suitability of such coals for use in the steel plants. Some of these coals exhibit good caking properties afetr they are beneficiated and ash content is reduced to 17-18 per cent. However, these coals are difficult to beneficiate and these cannot be fed to the existing washeries. Once the new washing capacity is estabilshed, it will be possible to utilize a significant proportion of coking coal, which are currently not being fed to the existing washeries.

**Lung diseases among miners of SCCL**

2335. SHRI V. HANUMANTHA RAO: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a large number of miners in Singareni collieries have developed diseases affecting their lungs;

(b) whether it is a fact that lung diseases have become common to workers in this collieries; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to give adequate protection to miners in Singareni colleries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA) (a) and (b) As per the information furnished by SCCL, there has been no such incidence of large scale occurence of lung dseases.

(c) The Company takes dust suppression measures including water-apraying in all the places where such problems exist. Periodical medical examinations of workers are conducted regularly and treatment provided in the initial stages itself, after its detection. Dust Surveys are done regularly to monitor the efficiency of the dust suppression arrangements.

**Fires in coal mines**

2336. SHRI MENTAY PADMANABHAM: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of fires in various coal mines owned by public sector units continue unabated;

(b) what is the status of this problem of fires in coal mines presently;

(c) whether there has been any success in reducing the fires during 1992-93;

(d) whether it is a fact that foreign *experts were called in the matter* and

(e) what steps are being taken to reduce fire hazard in coal mines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA): (a) to (e) Since the first recorded occurrence of fire in Jharia Coalfied in 1916, existence of 70 fires has been reported covering an area of 17.32 sq. kms. After nationalisation of coking coal mines in 1972, concerted efforts have been made to control these fires through the implementation of various schemes for dealing with major fires in the Jharia Coalfield. Total amount sanctioned for these schemes is Rs. 114.57 crores out of which a sum of Rs. 73 crore have already been spent. As a result of these efforts, five fires have been extinguished and the work to contain and control 16 more fires is in progress. Recently the matter was discussed with World Bank for technical and financial assistance. The World Bank has since agreed to finance a Technical Assistance Project for a diagnostic study for development of programme to deal with the coalfield fires. IDA credit for US $ 12 million has recently been approved out of a total envisaged investment of US 14.3 million.